



LINN COUNTY CONSERVATION

Continuing Sustainability Efforts Following Derecho

SALVAGE LOG HARVEST

In response to the derecho that devastated much of Linn County this past August, the Conservation Department is continuing its efforts to remove the devastation to its areas, while taking steps to replenish the woodlands. The derecho is one of the most expensive storms in history for this area. The financial impacts are not only for removal of storm debris, but to rebuild what was lost in our park areas.

Restoration efforts this winter will include salvage harvests in the most impacted areas: approximately 283 acres in the southern portion of Wanatee Park, and 17 acres just north of the Wickiup Hill Learning Center. B and R Logging was awarded the salvage contract based on their low bid.



WHY A SALVAGE HARVEST?

Concerns of user safety is one factor for the salvage harvest. While there is always a small risk involved when you decide to go for a hike in the woods, the amount of damaged trees and broken limbs that are so appropriately termed "widow makers" in our public woodlands must be addressed. Trails that once cut through the woodlands will need to be reclaimed.

After thorough research and consultation with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources District Forester, Linn County Conservation is formulating a plan to manage the damaged woodlands. "This will allow us to promote a healthy, native forest for future generations," said Dana Kellogg, Linn County Conservation Natural Resources Manager. "With a salvage harvest, a contractor extracts the storm damaged timber, then Linn County Conservation is able to sell this wood that would be used for commercial products." Revenue from these sales will be used to purchase native trees to assist with reforestation. Natural resource management plans will be adjusted to account for derecho impacts.

According to the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, oak species directly support 534 species of butterflies and moths, along with many other native species of wildlife. With 724,000 acres of forest being lost to the 2020 derecho, or about 25% of Iowa woodlands, replanting efforts need to include a diverse array of oak species to promote healthy woodland ecology. "The oak family is one of the most important tree families in Iowa forests," said Daniel Gibbins, Linn County Conservation Deputy Director. "Among other native species, a variety of oaks, such as red, white, bur, chinkapin, swamp white, and black oaks will be used as priority species during Linn County forest restoration efforts," said Gibbins. Oaks are declining across Iowa due to lack of forest management, suppression of woodland fire, and invasive or non-native species that shade out oak regeneration.

"There is a stewardship opportunity with this salvage harvest, allowing us to further address invasive, non-native species that have been introduced into our forests over time, harming the ecosystem," said Tony Nemmers, Natural Resources Specialist for Linn County Conservation. Given the abundance of sunshine that will now reach the open forest floor due to loss of tree canopy, these invasive plants would thrive. Maintenance of the newly planted areas will be required to assure that the native trees and shrubs establish. "In some cases, natural regeneration of native trees and shrubs will occur. In others, we will need to help the process along," said Nemmers. Over time, especially with introduction of invasive species and fire suppression, many woodlands have become thick jungles that often times do not resemble forests of the past.

CRITERIA FOR TREE REMOVAL

Trees MUST meet certain criteria in order to be harvested:

- 50% or more crown loss
- Uprooted trees will be removed. Stumps will remain in place to help reduce erosion and provide wildlife habitat.
- Trees with exposed heartwood will be harvested. Heartwood is the inner portion of wood in the main trunk of a tree. Even if a tree canopy appears relatively healthy, exposed heartwood is a pathway for rot and a tree will not be able to survive long term.
- In addition, no trees under 12 inches in diameter will be removed regardless of the damage. Smaller trees may be able to survive the damage inflicted on them and produce the necessary seeds to allow for natural regeneration. If these smaller trees would succumb, they could be left for wildlife habitat with low risk to park visitors.

BEST TIME FOR SALVAGE HARVEST IS DURING THE WINTER MONTHS

In order to cause the least amount of soil compaction and reduce erosion, the harvests will take place when the ground is typically frozen or dry. Work would then resume next winter. The Indiana and northern long-eared bat spend summers in Iowa's woodlands before overwintering in caves. By working during the winter, there is little potential effect on this endangered species. Oak wilt is another factor to consider. Oak wilt is a fungal disease that is spread by beetles that are attracted to the sap that is found on fresh wounds during the growing season. If a beetle visits an infected tree that has a fresh wound, it can spread it to uninfected trees that may also have fresh damage.

In an ideal world, a world without invasive species, nature could be allowed to take its course and our woodlands would recover from this event on their own. In the days and weeks following this terrible storm, neighbors helped neighbors and Iowans helped Iowans in the cleanup effort. Our landscape has been altered to the point where nature also needs our help.



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